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According to this study, different types of colleges attract different kinds of students with characteristic patterns of academic ability, vocational goals, educational values, personalities, and family backgrounds. Colleges selected by students are ranked according to popularity, scientific productivity index, religious versus nonreligious affiliation, and public versus private control. The findings are based on a 92-percent questionnaire return from 1957 National Merit scholars and one or both parents and on a 61-percent return from a one-sixth random sample of the total group of the 1957 Certificate of Merit winners and parents.

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Determinants of College Choice*

JOHN L. HOLLAND

THIS REPORT, the third of a series of studies designed to explore how students select undergraduate colleges, relates student choices of college to a number of personal and cultural forces which preliminary studies have suggested are meaningful correlates of choice. The present study confirms the general hypothesis derived from preliminary studies: namely, that different types of colleges attract different kinds of students with characteristic patterns of academic abilities, vocational goals, educational values, personalities, and family backgrounds.

The findings are based on a 92 per cent questionnaire return from National Merit Scholars and one or both parents, and a 61 per cent return from a one-sixth random sample of the total group of Certificate of Merit winners and parents. Both the Scholars and the Certificate of Merit group (near-winners) participated in the 1957 National Merit Scholarship program. Questionnaires were sent to students and their parents before the fall term of 1957. The students also took the California Psychological Inventory, a personality inventory; and the Chicago Inventory of Beliefs, an attitude scale.

Since the student samples are fairly representative of the finalists in the 1957 National Merit program, they probably approximate the most academically talented portion of the high school senior population. The representativeness of these samples with respect to the colleges which they plan to attend is not known.

For purposes of this study, "institutional choice" is described by categorizing the selected college in each of the following classifications: (1) more popular versus less popular, (2) high versus low Knapp-Goodrich index for scientific productivity for male samples, and high versus low rank Knapp-Greenbaum index for female samples,[1] (3) religious versus nonreligious affiliation, (4) public versus private control.

The first classification represents the choice of a college where

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[1] See references 6 and 7.

National Merit Scholars and Certificate of Merit winners tend to concentrate, or its opposite, the choice of a college excluded from this group. The list of "more popular" colleges is identical with that used in a preliminary study (4) and includes the following institutions:

For Men	*For Women*
California, University of	Barnard College
California Institute of Technology	Bryn Mawr College
Chicago, University of	Carleton College
Columbia University	Chicago, University of
Cornell University	Colorado, University of
Dartmouth College	Cornell University
Duke University	Duke University
Georgia Institute of Technology	Grinnell College
Harvard University	Indiana University
Iowa State College	Michigan, University of
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Mount Holyoke College
Michigan, University of	Oberlin College
Notre Dame, University of	Radcliffe College
Princeton University	Smith College
Purdue University	Stanford University
Rice Institute	Swarthmore College
Stanford University	Washington University
Wisconsin, University of	Wellesley College
Yale University	Wisconsin, University of

This criterion of popularity is given additional meaning by another report (5) which shows that the parents of the present samples regard 15 of these 19 colleges as the "best colleges" in the United States. A study by Thistlethwaite (10) indicates that 14 and 15 of the 19 popular colleges for men and women respectively are also found among the 38 institutions offering the greatest number of scholarships to Certificate of Merit winners in the first annual program. Furthermore, concentration in these institutions has occurred in at least one other national scholarship program (8).

For males, the second institutional classification was obtained using the Knapp-Goodrich index, which ranks colleges according to their production of scientists listed in *American Men of Science*. The highest-ranking 50 institutions on the index (6) were those included in the high rank group; the low rank group includes those institutions ranking 51 or more. For the female samples, the Knapp-Greenbaum

index of scholarly productivity, which gives the rate at which a college produces students attaining fellowships or Ph.D.'s, was used (7). The third and fourth classifications (Religious-Nonreligious, Public-Private) were obtained by using a standard reference (13).

Using these four institutional classifications, the student's choice of college was correlated with his questionnaire responses and inventory scale scores. The results are summarized in the following sections. The magnitude of the relationships found in this study are probably underestimated. The student and parent samples are very homogeneous with respect to many variables and classifications. Most of the students major in science. Their scholastic aptitude scores place them in the top 2 per cent of their high school classes and their test score variation is about half of that usually found for entering college freshmen. Similar test score elevations and accompanying restrictions in range of test scores exist for many of the distributions of scores on the CPI and Inventory of Beliefs. Parental characteristics also appear to be restricted in range. The majority of parents are college graduates and have incomes above the national average. In addition to these sampling factors, the use of the phi coefficient as a measure of correlation usually underestimates the actual correlation, since the upper limit of phi is reduced when dichotomies depart from a 50-50 split. In the present data, the high rank-low rank, public-private, and religious-nonreligious dichotomies are markedly unequal. For all of these reasons, it is highly probable that more extensive samples of students and parents or the comparison of college against college would increase the size of the relationship shown in the following tables.

In interpreting the four kinds of choice, the reader should also note their intercorrelation due to the overlapping nature of the categories. For example, the majority of the more popular institutions are also private; nonreligious institutions tend to be public; and high rank institutions are largely private.

INSTITUTIONAL POPULARITY

The student characteristics which are associated with the selection of a more popular institution are summarized in Table I. Since the more popular institutions are those in which talented students tend to concentrate, these results presumably reveal some of the personal characteristics which affect this kind of choice.

TABLE I

CORRELATES OF TALENT CONCENTRATION IN AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (STUDENTS)

Correlates	Merit Scholars		Near-Winners	
	Boys (N=568)	Girls (N=200)	Boys (N=448)	Girls (N=186)
1. Student Reasons for Choice[a]				
Best College I know of	.35	.21	.22	.17
College of high prestige	.29	.15	.19	
Good faculty	.13		.17	.40
High academic standing	.13	.20		.31
Good research reputation	.33		.19	.19
Good athletic program	.18	.17	.16	
Best college for intellectual development	.11	.16	.16	−.15
Low cost college	−.17		−.30	−.29
Close to home	−.25	−.27	−.21	−.31
Religious college	−.15	−.29	−.12	−.23
Small college	−.34	−.22	−.23	−.24
2. Scholastic Aptitudes				
SAT—verbal	.11	.16	.14	
SAT—mathematical	.15	.16	.19	
3. California Psychological Inventory				
Capacity for status	.18	.17	.12	
Achievement via independence	.15		.09	
Intellectual efficiency	.14			
Psychological-mindedness	.14			
Flexibility			.14	
Dominance	.12			
Social presence			.09	
Good impression	.11			
4. Inventory of Beliefs (Non-stereotypy)	.13	.21	.15	.20
5. Satisfaction with Choice	.23	.21	.18	.21

NOTE.—Only phi coefficients which are significant at or beyond the .05 level are shown in this and succeeding tables.

[a] In this table and tables 3, 5, and 7, only student explanations which are significant for at least 3 of the 4 samples are included in order to condense these data.

Table I indicates that students selecting more popular institutions have distinctive explanations for their choice. Their rankings of 19 explanations for their choice reveal that they place most importance on items such as "best college I know of," "college of high prestige," "good faculty," "high academic standing," "good research reputation," "good athletic program," and "best college for my intellectual development." In contrast, the choice of a less popular institution is associated with a desire for a small, religious, low-cost college which is close to home.

The student's choice of a popular college is related to his having

greater verbal and mathematical aptitudes as well as a number of other personal qualities which are suggestive of greater potential for achievement. These qualities include more capacity for status, achievement via independence, intellectual efficiency, psychological-mindedness, flexibility, dominance, social presence, good impression, and non-authoritarianism (non-stereotypy).[2] Although these relationships are statistically significant, they average only .15.

Since some of these personality variables have significant correlations with SAT scores, tests were made to estimate the effect of scholastic aptitude on the correlations obtained between personality scales and type of college choice. In general, corrections by means of partial order correlations produced only negligible differences.

Table I reveals that students of more popular colleges express greater satisfaction with their choice than do students selecting less popular institutions. This relationship is statistically significant for all four samples. The selection of a more popular institution is also positively related to student opinions that they are now attending the college offering the *best* training in their major field. This relationship is statistically significant for only the male samples.

Although the majority of these students plan on scientific careers, there is a significant relationship between career and institutional choice. Male Merit Scholars selecting more popular colleges more frequently major in the natural rather than the social sciences ($P < .01$). Both male Merit Scholars and male Certificate of Merit winners of more popular colleges aspire to higher level degrees (Ph.D. and M.D.) than do students of less popular institutions. These trends are, however, statistically significant only for the Certificate of Merit sample.

The parental and background characteristics associated with the student selection of a more popular institution are presented in Table II. Parental rankings of a series of desired goals of college training indicate that the student choice of a more popular institution is positively related to parental notions that a college education should develop the mind and intellectual abilities and teach the student how to enjoy life. Parents of children going to less popular schools say that a college education should help the student make a desirable marriage or prepare for marriage.

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[2]More explicit interpretation of the CPI and Inventory of Belief scales is provided in the following references (1, 9).

TABLE II

CORRELATES OF TALENT CONCENTRATION IN AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (PARENTS)

Correlates	Parents of Merit Scholars (N=768)	Parents of Near-winners (N=634)
1. Valued Institutional Goals		
Develop mind and intellectual abilities	.16	.13
Enjoy life	.10	.09
Prepare for marriage		−.11
Desirable marriage	−.10	−.09
2. Image of Ideal College		
National versus local reputation	.20	.15
High-cost versus low-cost	.16	.17
Public versus private		−.12
Coeducational versus single-sex	−.09	−.12
Close to versus away from home	−.15	−.17
Small versus large	−.22	−.12
Religious versus nonreligious	−.30	−.21
3. Cultural and Economic Factors		
Books in home[a]	.10[b] .18[c]	.11[b] .21[c]
Fathers' education	.10	.17
Mothers' education		.14
Family income	.15	.18
Future student income (son)	.21	.11

[a] Reported by students; consequently, correlations for both male and female samples were obtained. Remaining information in table obtained from one or both parents so that only one correlation is reported per sample. [b]=boys, [c]=girls.

Parents were asked to describe the ideal college for their children by indicating their preferences by means of a series of paired alternatives. Student choice of a more popular college is associated with parental desire for a large, private, nonreligious, single-sex, high-cost college, with a national reputation, located away from home. The choice of a less popular institution is related to the opposed qualities of small, public, religious, coeducational, low-cost college with a local reputation, located close to home.

The number of books in the home, the level of fathers' and mothers' education, and family income are positively related to the choice of a more popular institution. The income parents would expect their son to be making ten years after college if he were to be considered "successful" is also positively associated with institutional popularity.

In summary, the choice of a more popular institution appears to be the function of high socio-economic status and many of its correlates.

Parents of students in this group have high incomes, are well-educated, and emphasize institutional goals which are largely congruent with their status. Their children reflect parental values and qualities for they have more scholastic ability, plan to take higher-level degrees, and are characterized by personality variables which suggest achievement potential, flexibility, and capacity for status. Their expressed preferences for large, high-cost, high-quality, nonreligious institutions located away from home suggest their high status background. The choice of a less popular college indicates the opposed cluster of attributes, including low status, education, income, etc.

INSTITUTIONAL RANKINGS

The relationships between student characteristics and the choice of an institution of high rank on the Knapp-Goodrich index (males) or Knapp-Greenbaum index (females) are shown in Table III.

Table III indicates that students choosing high rank colleges base their choice on "high academic standing" and "small college." Girls selecting high rank institutions tend to have more academic aptitude than girls selecting low rank institutions, but only two of the four relationships for girls are statistically significant. For boys, academic aptitudes are unrelated to this choice.

The relationships between personality variables and choice shown

TABLE III

CORRELATES OF INSTITUTIONAL RANKINGS (STUDENTS)

Correlates	Merit Scholars		Near-Winners	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1. Student Reasons for Choice				
High academic standing		.22	.10	.18
Small college	.30	−.17	.27	
2. Scholastic Aptitudes				
SAT—verbal				.17
SAT—mathematical		.16		
3. California Psychological Inventory				
Sense of well-being			.10	
Socialization	−.08			
Psychological-mindedness		.21	.09	
Flexibility	.16	.18		
Good impression			.10	
4. Inventory of Beliefs				
(Non-stereotypy)	.12	.28	.13	
5. Satisfaction with Choice			.15	.18

in Table III suggest that the choice of a high ranking institution is positively associated with sense of well-being, psychological-mindedness (sensitivity to others), flexibility, good impression, non-stereotypy, and is negatively associated with socialization (propriety). Although most of these relationships are not found in more than one sample, together they consistently suggest that high ranking institutions attract students whose personality scores are more indicative of scholarly potential than are those of students attracted to low-ranking institutions.

The choice of a high ranking institution tends to be related to satisfaction with choice, since two of the four student samples reveal significant positive relationships. Further, for both male samples, high rank is also significantly correlated with students' belief that they will receive the *best* possible training in their major field.

Students also differ with respect to their desire for advanced training and their preference for a pure or applied scientific major. The male Merit Scholar and male Certificate of Merit groups in institutions with high ranks have a significantly higher percentage of concentration in pure science majors (85.7 and 57.4 per cent), as opposed to students in low rank institutions (53.9 and 39.5 per cent). This choice is also related to aspirations for high level degrees. Seventy-six per cent of the male Merit Scholars and 67 per cent of the male Certificate of Merit winners selecting high rank institutions plan on higher level degrees, whereas only 60 and 53 per cent of these groups selecting low rank institutions aspire to high level degrees. These differences between the high and low rank students are significant beyond the .01 and .10 per cent levels for Merit Scholar and Certificate of Merit samples, respectively. For females, both of the above relationships are negative for all samples.

The parents of students attracted to colleges with high ranks value learning how to enjoy life, and developing mind and intellectual abilities. The parents of students at colleges of lower rank place less emphasis on these institutional training goals. See Table IV. The parents of students selecting colleges of high rank conceive of the ideal college as a small, nonreligious, private, coeducational college with a national reputation. The choice of a low ranking institution is associated with opposed characteristics.

The selection of an institution of high rank is related to family socio-economic status, but the relationships are less frequent than

TABLE IV

CORRELATES OF INSTITUTIONAL RANKINGS (PARENTS)

Correlates	Parents of	
	Merit Scholars	Near-Winners
1. Valued Institutional Goals		
Enjoy life	.08	.09
Develop mind and intellectual abilities	.08	.08
2. Image of Ideal College		
Small versus large	.12	.12
National versus local reputation	.10	
Coeducational versus single-sex	.09	
Public versus private	−.11	
Religious versus nonreligious	−.13	
3. Cultural and Economic Factors		
Books in home		.12[a]
Fathers' education		
Mothers' education	.09	.16
Family income	.08	
Future student income (son)		

[a] For parents of male Near-Winners only.

those found for the more popular-less popular dimension. High rank choices are also positively related to the number of books in the home, mothers' educational level, and family income. No significant relationships exist between choice and fathers' education, or between choice and expected future income for son.

In addition to the findings shown in Table IV, the parents of students for the high rank-low rank classification authored the questionnaires in varying proportions. A single Parent Questionnaire was sent to each family to be completed by either parent, or both parents. A comparison of the distributions of parental respondents was negative for all the classifications except high rank-low rank, in which case the parents of students going to high rank institutions completed the questionnaire together more frequently (46.2 per cent) than did the parents of students attending low rank institutions (34.6 per cent). Parent questionnaires were completed more frequently by the mother alone for the low rank group (30.5 per cent) than for the high rank group (20.7 per cent). These differences are significant beyond the .05 per cent level. One obvious interpretation is that both parents of students going to high rank institutions take an active role in the education of their children.

To summarize, the selection of an institution with a high rating on the Knapp-Goodrich or Knapp-Greenbaum indexes conforms to a pat-

tern indicative of less concern with externals and more concern with intellectual values. Mothers have a high level of education, and both parents express preferences for a small college which will develop the student's intellectual abilities. Their children too desire a small college, and one which has a high academic standing. The personality scores of these students imply capacity for achievement and creativity. This interpretation is reinforced by their preferences for pure rather than applied science and their relatively long term academic goals. In contrast, the choice of an institution with a low rank is related to personality patterns less favorable for intellectual achievement.

Some of these findings about the differences in personality found between students selecting high rank-low rank institutions are indirectly supported by a similar study by Heist (2), using a sample of Merit Scholars and Certificate of Merit winners for 1956. Heist finds statistically significant differences between the students attending the top ranking 50 institutions on the Knapp-Greenbaum index and all other liberal arts institutions. High ranking institutions have students who are more socially introverted, more complex in their outlook or perceptions, more original, and less authoritarian than students attending low rank institutions.

PRIVATE VERSUS PUBLIC COLLEGES

In selecting a private college, students stress reasons such as "small," "liberal arts," "religious," "best college I know of," and "best college for my intellectual development." The choice of a public college is related to less valuation of these reasons and a greater emphasis on "low-cost," "close to home," "desirable location" and "coeducational." See Table V.

The choice of a private institution is associated with high verbal aptitude for three of the four samples. Mathematical aptitude is not, however, significantly related to choice.

The phi coefficients in Table V suggest that private institutional choice is positively related to the CPI variables of achievement via independence, femininity (boys), masculinity (girls), flexibility (girls), and is negatively associated with sociability and social presence (girls). The Inventory of Beliefs also implies that private institutions attract boys with a flexible outlook. These findings should be regarded as only suggestive since they hold at best for only two of the four student samples.

TABLE V

CORRELATES OF PRIVATE INSTITUTIONAL CHOICE (STUDENTS)

Correlates	Merit Scholars		Near-Winners	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1. Student Reasons for Choice				
Low-cost college	−.34	−.37	−.46	−.31
Close to home	−.29	−.25	−.32	−.25
Desirable location	−.14	−.15	−.19	−.16
Coeducational	−.21		−.21	−.40
Best college for my intellectual development	.11		.11	.20
Best college I know of	.13	.18	.10	
Religious college	.09	.22		.20
Liberal arts reputation	.29		.23	.17
Small college	.27	.24	.36	.26
2. Scholastic Aptitude				
SAT—verbal	.13		.23	.21
SAT—mathematical				
3. California Psychological Inventory				
Achievement via independence	.11	.14		
Femininity	.10	−.14		
Sociability				−.14
Social presence				−.14
Flexibility		.14		
4. Inventory of Beliefs				
(Non-stereotypy)			.15	
5. Satisfaction with Choice	.13		.17	

Table V reveals that the choice of a private college is related to satisfaction with choice. This trend is similar to that observed for the more and less popular dimension of choice. In the case of boys, private rather than public college students also believe that they will receive the best training. These differences in belief are significant beyond the .001 level for both male samples, but are not significant for the female samples.

Except for the male Merit Scholars, differences in occupational and training goals for this dichotomy are generally insignificant. Both male samples differ significantly, however, when their science goals are categorized as "pure" or "applied." In this case, selection of a public institution is associated with the applied sciences (60 and 67 per cent) as opposed to the pure sciences (40 and 33 per cent) for the Merit Scholars and Certificate of Merit winners respectively. Conversely, private colleges attract more students with pure science majors. This result is consistent with an additional finding: namely, private colleges attract males with aspirations for high level degrees. This relationship is, however, significant only for the male Merit

TABLE VI
CORRELATES OF PRIVATE INSTITUTIONAL CHOICE (PARENTS)

Correlates	Parents of	
	Merit Scholars	Near-Winners
1. Valued Institutional Goals		
Lead to higher income	−.10	−.08
Vocational or professional training	−.12	
Desirable marriage	−.08	
Develop mind and intellectual abilities	.07	
Develop moral standards	.08	
Learn how to enjoy life		.09
2. Image of Ideal College		
Private versus public	.49	.40
Coeducational versus single-sex	−.19	−.22
Close to versus away from home	−.16	−.13
Religious versus nonreligious	.08	
High versus low cost	.13	.14
Small versus large	.22	.26
3. Cultural and Economic Factors		
Books in home	.09[a]	
Fathers' education	.10	.13
Mothers' education		.12
Family income	.10	.12
Future student income (son)	.10	

[a] For parents of male Scholars only.

Scholars. The parental correlates of choice are presented in Table VI. Student choice of a private institution is positively related to the following parental goals for college training: "learn how to enjoy life," "develop moral standards," and "develop mind and intellectual abilities." In contrast, parents of children with public college choices rate these goals somewhat lower and rate the following goals higher: "lead to higher income," "vocational or professional training," and "desirable marriage."

The parental conceptions of the ideal college for the private college student include such characteristics as private, single-sex, away from home, religious, high-cost, and small. For male Merit Scholars and Certificate of Merit winners, the choice of a private college is also related to parental preferences for institutions with liberal arts (62 and 57 per cent) rather than scientific reputations (30 and 35 per cent). A reversal of preferences was obtained from the parents of students selecting public colleges: only 27 and 37 per cent conceive of the ideal college as having a liberal arts reputation and 61 and 48 per cent prefer a college with a scientific reputation. These differences are

both significant beyond the .001 level. For girls, institutional reputation is not related to choice.

The choice of a private rather than a public college is associated with higher cultural and economic background factors, including more books in the home, higher levels of parental education, higher family income, and higher anticipated student income.

In summary, the selection of a private institution is correlated with a high socio-economic status pattern. Parents have high incomes, advanced education, and many books in the home. They see college training as a way to develop moral standards and intellectual abilities, and to learn how to enjoy life. Their ideal college is a high-cost institution which is private, single-sex, away from home, and noted for its liberal arts training. Their children reiterate these goals and values in explaining their selection. Unlike students selecting public colleges, they aspire to higher educational degrees, have more verbal ability, and are characterized by personality traits which are associated with higher academic achievement.

RELIGIOUS VERSUS NONRELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

In selecting a religious college, students report that the most important determinants were small size and religious affiliation. In contrast, the choice of an institution without religious affiliation is related to the following items: "good physical facilities," "college of high prestige," "good research reputation," and "good athletic program." See Table VII. Table VII suggests that boys selecting religious colleges may have less academic ability than those selecting nonreligious colleges. For girls, there is no relationship between choice and academic aptitudes.

The CPI and Inventory of Beliefs suggest that the choice of a nonreligious institution is associated with the following variables: capacity for status, good impression, social presence, psychological-mindedness, intellectual efficiency, achievement via independence, flexibility, tolerance, and non-authoritarianism or non-stereotypy. On the other hand, the choice of a religious institution is associated with responsibility and with lower scores on the variables listed above. Note that most of these findings pertain largely to the male samples.

For the male Merit Scholar sample only, satisfaction with choice, college major, and level of degree sought are significantly related to the religious-nonreligious dichotomy. Boys attracted to religious

TABLE VII

CORRELATES OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONAL CHOICE (STUDENTS)

Correlates	Merit Scholars		Near-Winners	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1. Student Reasons for Choice				
Religious college	.43	.45	.34	.36
Small college	.26	.27	.22	.17
Good athletic program	−.22	−.16	−.16	
Good research reputation	−.30		−.21	−.31
College of high prestige	−.20	−.20	−.17	−.17
Good physical facilities	−.27	−.15	−.24	−.16
2. Scholastic Aptitude				
SAT—verbal			−.12	
SAT—mathematical	−.15			
3. California Psychological Inventory				
Capacity for status	−.14			−.14
Good impression	−.10			−.14
Social presence	−.13		−.09	
Psychological-mindedness	−.23			
Intellectual efficiency	−.17			
Achievement via independence	−.12			
Flexibility	−.11			
Tolerance	−.08			
Responsibility			.09	
4. Inventory of Beliefs (Non-stereotypy)	−.16		−.17	
5. Satisfaction with Choice	−.14			

rather than nonreligious institutions express more dissatisfaction with their choice of college, major more frequently in social rather than natural sciences, plan more frequently on lower degrees, and give lower ratings of the quality of training they expect to get at their colleges.

The parental characteristics and related background factors which are correlated with the student choice of a religious institution are shown in Table VIII.

An emphasis on moral standards and religious values characterizes the parents of students making religious choices. The parents of students going to nonreligious institutions said that college training should lead to a higher income, make the student a more cultured person, teach him how to enjoy life, and develop his mind and intellectual abilities.

The ideal college, according to parents of children selecting a religious institution, is a small, private, religious college which has a local reputation and is close to home. These parents also express a greater preference for a liberal arts orientation than do the parents of

TABLE VIII

CORRELATES OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONAL CHOICE (PARENTS)

Correlates	Parents of	
	Merit Scholars	Near-Winners
1. Valued Institutional Goals		
Develop moral standards	.14	.18
More cultured person		−.10
Lead to higher income	−.10	
Enjoy life		−.10
Develop mind and intellectual abilities	−.08	−.10
2. Image of Ideal College		
Religious versus nonreligious	.41	.37
Small versus large	.20	.15
Close to versus away from home	.13	.10
Public versus private	−.14	
National versus local reputation	−.24	−.13
3. Cultural and Economic Factors		
Books in home	−.12[a]	
Fathers' education		
Mothers' education		−.08
Family income		
Future student income (son)	−.14	−.12

[a] For parents of male Scholars only.

students selecting a nonreligious college. This difference is statistically significant only for the male Merit Scholars.

The choice of a religious institution is negatively related to the number of books in the home, mothers' education, and concern with the future financial status of sons. However, only the latter finding holds for all samples.

In short, the choice of a religious institution reveals a student-parent pattern which is dominated by religious values. Parents believe that the ideal college is a small religious college close to home. They feel that the development of moral standards is a more important goal of college education than the development of intellectual abilities. Religious students, like their parents, selected their college for its religious affiliation and small size. Compared with students choosing nonreligious institutions, these students may have less academic ability, plan less frequently to take high level degrees, and have personality traits which are more indicative of a lower achievement potential.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The following statements summarize the major findings and their implications.

1. The selection of an undergraduate institution is probably the outcome of a complex set of forces including student goals, abilities, and personality, which interact with parental values, education, socio-economic status, and parental images of the "best" and ideal college.

Like many personal decisions, the choice patterns found here are probably not readily amenable to change because they are grounded in cultural and personal development. The study also suggests that the concentration of scholarship recipients in more popular institutions results in part from a belief that the more popular colleges are the best. This hypothesized relationship is supported by several lines of evidence. First, students selecting more popular colleges are more satisfied with their choice than are any other student group. Second, parents believe the more popular colleges are "best in the United States" (5). They make these evaluations for the most part independently of where their children plan to attend, or must attend. For many students and their parents, then, the receipt of scholarships assists families in acting upon these beliefs. This hypothesis is reinforced by retrospective student reports in which they indicate that their scholarship helped them to attend a better institution (11). The concentration of intellectual talent may also be furthered by the disproportionate number of scholarships offered by more popular institutions (10) and by a variety of other institutional characteristics and activities including age, geographical location, size of national alumni organizations, formal and informal public relations, and similar influences.

2. The evidence for institutional choice strongly suggests that colleges receive talent supplies which differ not only in their abilities for academic work but also in their personalities and values; consequently, it is likely that there is a great range of potential for various kinds of achievement (academic, scientific, economic, religious) among student populations. And of equal importance, these divergent populations are subject to different parental pressures for different goals and achievements.

This analysis of college choice suggests a need to reconsider educational goals and practices and perhaps to develop institutional programs in terms of a particular talent supply and its accompanying parental goals and values. In addition, the evidence for motivational differences among student populations indicates the need for further study of these personality variables and their influence upon institutional productivity.

In an earlier report, it was suggested that the high rank colleges in the Knapp-Goodrich and Knapp-Greenbaum indexes received a greater number of talented students than would be expected in terms of their size (3). In view of the present study, it appears that these colleges may also receive students whose personal qualities are more conducive to potential achievement and creativity than do schools of lower rank. In this study, the private, high rank, and nonreligious institutions probably enroll a disproportionate share of students with outstanding scholarly and scientific potential, and the parents and students for these classes of choice make explicit some of the institutional qualities previously assumed to stimulate achievement—small size, private control, high academic standing, nonsectarian, and liberal arts reputation. The poor showing of public and religious institutions in terms of this index can be accounted for in some measure by their less promising student populations whose goals and parental influences are more practical, less academic, and more diffuse than those of private and nonreligious colleges. Since this new evidence suggests that these productivity indexes may be attributed in part to student and parent characteristics rather than to institutional qualities alone, the devaluation of public, religious, and low rank institutions resulting from the past acceptance of this index does not appear warranted.

In a similar fashion, Traxler's index of institutional quality (12) based on male graduates listed in *Who's Who in America* may be in error since it fails to equate institutions for talent supply. Ninety-one per cent of the top ranking institutions (indexes of less than 100) on the Traxler index are private colleges. Eleven of these 67 colleges are also found among the 19 colleges defined as the "more popular" institutions in the present study; consequently, these results can be attributed partially to the relatively high achievement potential and socio-economic status of the students selecting this set of institutions rather than to educative values of these institutions alone.

It is not possible, however, to estimate from our data the relative contribution of student qualities and institutional qualities to student postcollege achievement. Estimates of the relative contributions of the student and his institution would require a comparison of differences in rates of producing Ph.D.'s accounted for (a) by indexes of student quality (including both intellectual and motivational traits), and (b) by indexes descriptive of faculty and administrative behavior.

Practically, these reinterpretations of previous productivity studies

suggest that students and parents should be cautioned that achievement and personal productivity may be as much a function of student activity as it is of institutional training. Although institutions may facilitate achievement, there is no evidence to indicate that they do so independently of their students and the parental influences which these students bring to colleges and universities.

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